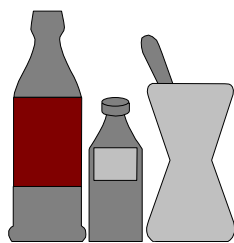


Medical Quackery

Sure-cures for medical problems, whether chronic or terminal, drain millions of dollars from consumers' wallets each year. They also keep thousands of consumers from appropriate medical treatment.

TV infomercials, and newspaper, magazine, radio and internet ads often make fabulous claims, use official-sounding titles and testimonials from many satisfied customers. Today's snake oil sellers try to convince you they've discovered new solutions to age-old problems. They may hint that the federal government is keeping people from a product that has cured thousands in other countries. Some use national advertising to deceptively sell "miracles" they can't produce—potions and products for health, beauty, vitality and happiness.

The Bureau of Consumer Protection says there are ways to tell which health-related products are legitimate and which are not. For example, learn to recognize worthless products by the typical phrases often used to promote them.



- Does the ad promise “a quick and easy cure”?
- Is the product advertised as effective for a wide range of ailments or for undiagnosed pain?
- Does the promoter use key words such as “miraculous,” “exclusive,” “secret,” or “ancient”?
- Is the product advertised as available from only one source, requiring payment in advance?

- Does the promoter use undocumented case histories that sound too good to be true?

Don't rely on promises of a “money-back guarantee”. Be aware that many fly-by-night operators will never be there to respond to a refund request.

Protect yourself by taking the following precautions:

- Don't trust your health to a salesperson, ad or TV infomercial.
- Don't believe claims of a “secret” or “miracle drug” that works on a wide variety of ailments.
- Don't buy medical devices, bracelets or other products without consulting your

doctor or an appropriate health professional.

- Be skeptical of claims of excessive or immediate weight loss or recaptured youth or sexual function.
- Don't buy any product based on the seller's claim that the purchase will be covered by Medicare or other insurance.

Always discuss your medical problems with your family physician. If you can't get help or information you need, switch doctors—don't start buying cures through the mail or 800 numbers.

Why Health Fraud Schemes Work

Health fraud, or quackery, is a business that sells false hope. It preys on persons who are victims of diseases that have no complete medical cures, such as arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and certain forms of cancer. It also thrives on the wishful thinking of those who want short-cuts to weight loss or improvements to personal appearance. It makes enormous profits because it claims to offer quick cures and easy solutions to better health and personal attractiveness.

While the health fraud business causes widespread economic

harm, the most harmful are the ones that turn people away from proper medical diagnosis and treatment of serious illnesses. In addition, some bogus products themselves may be harmful.

Again, when you have a question about the value of a product, ask your physician or pharmacist.

For more information, or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

(800) 422-7128

FAX: (608) 224-4939

TTY: (608) 224-5058

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